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New Fields and New Skills in Today's Reading

ONCE UPON a time we thought of reading as a separate subject to be pursued only in connection with our basic readers. We had reading every day from 9:45 to 10:30. Reading progress meant achievement in terms of the reading textbook. And that was made up largely of stories and poems of various kinds.

Then with our "reading lesson" over for the day, we went on to geography, history, arithmetic, and other subjects in the course of study. Of course we read in these areas, too. But for years, we didn't think of this as "Reading." That was something you did with the basal reader or with an occasional library book.

But that was back in the days of "Once upon a time" and the Land of Make Believe.

Now we are facing the fact that reading is a process, not a subject, and that we use reading in nearly every subject-matter area. In their storybooks children may read simply for the narrative. In their social studies period, they are reading for information—sometimes factual reports, sometimes maps and globes, sometimes simple charts and graphs. Arithmetic and science require still different reading skills.

This requires that the reader be on the alert for details from which inferences may be made. It requires him to be critical and analytical. It

requires that he check several sources of information and then make his own evaluation.

This kind of reading is very different from storybook reading. And it demands quite specialized reading-study skills.

In this issue of *THE READING TEACHER* are three articles on the general subject of developing the basic reading-study skills. They are presented with the hope that we will think of reading instruction as the responsibility of all teachers at all grade levels and in all subject-matter fields.

Nancy Larrick, Editor

In the May Issue

"The Psychology of Skill Building" by Dr. Bertha Friedman

"Helping Children Learn to Use Context Clues" by Dr. Mary C. Austin

"What About Phonics in the Modern Reading Program?" by Dr. Alvina Treut Burrows

"Emotional Problems of Poor Readers" by Dr. Helen M. Robinson

"Parents and Teachers Study the Reading Program Together" by Dr. William D. Sheldon

"What Research Tells Us About Readiness" by Dr. Gertrude Williams

Book and magazine reviews and news of local reading councils.

Special Reading Skills Are Needed In Social Studies, Science, Arithmetic

by E. Elona Sochor
School of Education
The State College of Washington
Pullman, Washington

MORE and more teachers are recognizing the importance of reading skills in all areas of the curriculum. Gone forever is the belief that the ability to read all materials can be adequately evaluated or developed in a basal reader or an English class.

Reading has no content of its own. It is a process used for acquiring information, for solving a problem, or for recreation and enjoyment. It is a means to an end.

Therefore, in order to read, we must read some type of content material. What is commonly called "reading" in the school is the comprehension of stories or other types of literature such as are found in basal readers or anthologies.

The present trend is to include in such textbooks a greater variety of materials with a sampling of selections from social studies and science. However, these selections remain a mere sampling. Sufficient ability to read all the types of content materials necessary in school activities cannot be developed by using any one textbook. Nor can the development of these abilities be left to chance.

The Present Problem

The importance of adequate reading ability in the various areas of scholastic achievement, even at the

This is the first of three articles in this issue on the general subject of "Basic Reading Study Skills." The second by Dr. Leo Fay begins on page 12. The third by Dr. Joseph Gainsberg is on pages 19-26.

elementary level, has long been recognized. (13, 16). Educators have accepted the fact that a child unable to read materials at his interest and maturity levels is denied one vital aid to learning.

Reading skills are basic in our present-day schools if a child is to achieve in all curriculum areas at a level commensurate with his capacity. Moreover, it is the direct responsibility of every teacher to see that each pupil is able to capitalize on his potentialities. She should contribute what and how she can toward this end.

Teachers at the elementary school level commonly recognize the effect of reading deficiencies when a child attempts to read particular social studies, science, or health books, even though as teachers they may do little to remedy the situation. The recognition of a child's inability to read and interpret an arithmetic problem, however, seems to be less apparent.

The Reading Teacher

In contrast, many secondary school teachers are just becoming aware of the fact that "reading" is an integral and necessary part of learning in their classes. These teachers still assume too frequently that the development of all reading abilities should be completed when a child leaves the sixth grade.

Yet it is at the secondary level that the need to read adequately in specific content fields is more pronounced. The content becomes more specialized. As a result, the "reading" becomes more difficult if the skills characteristic of and necessary for the particular area are not developed.

Another common assumption of secondary school teachers is that all the necessary reading skills can be developed in an English or special "reading" class. Thus, since concepts are basic to reading comprehension, the teachers of these classes must develop historical, mathematical, and scientific concepts with the students referred to them. The fallacy of such an assumption is obvious.

Likewise, at the elementary school level, the development of reading skills is frequently not included in specific subject matter learning activities. The teacher assumes that the time spent on developing reading skills in the daily "reading period" is sufficient. She assumes further that a child will be able to read all materials if he can read his basal reader well or achieve satisfactorily on a standardized, "general" reading test.

The basic premise underlying the use of such procedures at any grade level, however, has been refuted by research.

The Complexity of Reading

At one time, reading was considered a "general ability." It was assumed to be the same regardless of the material being read.

The development of skills was limited to a period reserved for "reading instruction." Reading achievement was appraised solely by means of a "general" reading test. If a child succeeded in these situations, the teacher concluded that the child was a "good reader" in all materials.

In view of what was known about the reading process, such practices were justified thirty-five years ago.

More recent investigations, however, have indicated otherwise:

1. Reading is not a "general" ability. Rather it is a complex of many skills and abilities. (7).
2. Reading comprehension in any subject matter area can be broken down into many skills and abilities. (12, 14, 19, 20).
3. The ability to interpret what is read requires a different pattern of comprehension skills in each content field. (4, 12, 19, 21).
4. A student may be able to comprehend satisfactorily in one content area and not in another. (12, 15).
5. The ability to grasp the "facts" does not guarantee the ability to do higher level, or critical, interpretation. (1, 8).
6. One reading test, standardized or teacher-constructed, cannot appraise reading ability in all reading situations. (4, 12, 19, 21).
7. While there are reading skills common to the various areas of the curriculum, there is enough difference

in the nature and pattern of the skills characteristic of each area to warrant specific instruction. (12, 15, 19).

Teaching in the Content Fields

The conclusions listed above have definite implications for teaching in the content areas.

First, since reading comprehension is not a "generalized" or "unitary" ability, all teachers should teach specific reading interpretation skills systematically in the subject matter areas. This is best accomplished when and as reading is required for learning.

Certain skills appear to be relatively basic to all areas of the curriculum. These skills can be introduced in the basal reader program or in any other textbook. However, the use and application of these same skills in interpreting other content materials read must be guided and encouraged by the teacher. Sufficient transfer of training in most cases will not occur automatically, probably because the varying nature of the concepts among the subject matter areas requires different ways of thinking.

Skills suggested as basic to reading comprehension in all materials are:

1. Interpreting the facts accurately.
2. Grasping the general idea or meaning of the selection.
3. Identifying the sequence, whether chronological, logical, or arbitrary.
4. Organizing the ideas, which involves recognizing the central theme, the main ideas, the significant details related to the main ideas, and the coordinate value of main points and details.

5. Reaching a conclusion or generalization.

6. Solving problems of various types; i.e., personal, social, scientific, or mathematical.

7. Evaluating ideas for relevancy, authenticity.

8. Interpreting pictorial materials, such as graphs, maps, diagrams.

9. Following directions.

In addition to the ability to use the above skills with facility, there are two other factors important to learning in subject matter areas when reading is involved. These, like the skills, should be included in the learning activities.

The first is the development of an adequate reading vocabulary in each content area. Words that are typical of and frequently used in subject matter materials must be thoroughly understood by the reader if he is to comprehend the materials. Another aspect is that the same word may be used in a different manner or with different meanings in the same text. Readers should be guided into appreciating the significance of word meanings basic to adequate interpretation of printed materials.

The other factor is the reader's habit of relating what he is reading and learning to previously learned knowledge. Reviewing or referring to information already known, using a concept developed in the past, determining the significance of the "new" ideas as compared with the related "old" ones, classifying facts to get an "over-view," reorganizing or summarizing a unit: these are some of the ways through which boys and girls can acquire the habit of utilizing their backgrounds.

A second implication drawn from the studies on reading comprehension applies to verbalism, the repetition or use of words and phrases without understanding their meaning. The evil is pronounced in schools today, particularly at the secondary school level and in the content fields.

Requiring more adequate comprehension, discouraging the memorization of factual material or an author's terminology and phrasing, encouraging the expression of ideas in personal language patterns, and stressing the development of concepts will help to combat this unfortunate and critical situation.

Most effective is placing emphasis upon those comprehension skills in the subject matter areas which necessitate a higher level of "thinking." (9). Mere interpretation of facts is not sufficient. More adequate ability in and use of such activities as applying facts, organizing and evaluating ideas, and solving problems will provide the solution.

A third implication is that the reading ability of every student should be appraised in each content field with materials taken from that field. In view of the lack of tests designed to measure specifically reading comprehension skills, teachers should construct informal tests (2, Chapter XXI) using subject matter selections to determine the needs of pupils. Daily observation and evaluation by the teacher of a child's performance when reading subject matter textbooks or discussing information acquired are also helpful.

Such appraisal should also determine the level in the content field at

which the child is able to work independently and the level where he needs teacher guidance. (2, Chapter XXI). The fact that a pupil is achieving successfully in a third basal reader, for example, does not mean the same pupil is necessarily ready to read a "third level" science book.

The child may lack background of information for those particular science topics. He may be frustrated by the number or the nature of the science concepts included. The language may be too difficult for him to interpret.

The same situation may occur in any other subject matter area and at any "grade" level.

In content fields particularly, teachers are vitally interested in the pupils' acquisition of usable knowledge and understandings basic to living. It is true that reading is but one aid to learning. However, reading is still the most widely used aid.

When reading is used as a tool for learning, there must be adequate comprehension. What is not understood cannot be learned readily; and what is not well learned cannot be retained. Reading comprehension skills in all areas are necessary to learning.

Beginning with the child "where he is" applies to the use of arithmetic or history texts as well as to a basal reader. Instruction must be initiated at the appropriate level of difficulty. Guidance should be supplied in terms of the child's individual needs in particular content material.

In order to do this, the teacher must know the skills necessary for interpreting subject matter textbooks or other materials which are used in learning

activities. She needs an appraisal instrument with which she can evaluate the achievement and needs of the students in the area. Then she must provide systematic guidance at the pupil's level of development.

Differences Among Content Fields

To give guidance in the development of reading skills necessary for a particular content field, any teacher must know which comprehension skills are peculiar to that field. The reading process in the different curriculum areas varies.

As mentioned earlier, certain concepts and ideas are characteristic of each subject matter field. These are represented by the so-called "technical vocabulary." The word form as well as the meaning of specialized words must be mastered.

The desired understandings and learnings differ in the various areas because of the basic nature of the content. In social studies, for example, the social aspects of our culture are emphasized; in science, the scientific aspects. The recognition of cause-effect relationships is important in both areas, though the understandings are derived differently.

Each area has a background of information that is essentially its own. The organization of this background is one type for mathematics, another for English.

Ideas are not evaluated in the same manner. Emotional reaction to poetry is desirable in English; lack of objectivity, undesirable in science.

Thus, the pattern of thinking necessary for acquiring knowledge in one of these areas, let us say science, dif-

fers in varying degrees from each of the others. Moreover, that same type of thinking is required to interpret and evaluate printed materials in science.

The ability of students to think cannot be assumed to be present in spite of intelligence, maturation, or normal school progression (14, 20). This is especially true of critical thinking in content fields.

In addition to these differentiating factors, each subject matter area utilizes its own specialized devices, such as maps, graphs, tables, thermometers, formulas, diagrams, symbols, and signs. Frequently, accurate interpretation of such devices is closely related to the comprehension of the printed materials.

Thus, regardless of which subject matter field is considered, the teacher guiding the learning activities is in the most strategic position to develop the necessary understandings, abilities, and habits—the background of information, the concepts and the vocabulary, the organization of ideas, the skills in interpreting specialized devices, and the ability to think critically with and about the facts and knowledge acquired.

She will know more about the content being explored, and she will understand the needs of her students better than anyone else can in that particular situation. Moreover, she can develop the above through normal classroom activities as needed.

Specific Skills Basic to Reading In the Content Fields

The relative importance of specific skills varies among the content areas.

For example, it is more important to be able to follow directions and to visualize what is read in science than in social studies.

On the other hand, identifying the central theme and the mood, tone, and purpose of the author tend to be more significant in social studies.

Problem solving is more specific and utilizes facts more directly in science and mathematics. However, the ability to solve problems of another type is just as important in social studies.

The interpretation of figurative language is an important factor in literature and in many social studies materials. Science materials tend to be written more directly, thus requiring the ability to note details carefully.

The ability to locate information and to discriminate between fact and opinion appear to be more important in social studies than in science.

Differentiating between relevant and irrelevant facts is important in both social studies and mathematics. However, in mathematics certain facts are more significant than others in the solution of problems. These must be recognized. Moreover, thinking in mathematics is highly quantitative, and much depends upon the grasp of mathematical concepts and vocabulary.

In the reading of literature materials, the reader's purpose is most frequently one of enjoyment and pleasure. This requires the use of sensory impressions and the reader's projection of himself into the situation; for example, feeling the rain on his face, hearing the crackle of the fire,

seeing the beauty of the waterfall, and experiencing emotionally the joy at receiving a much desired pet.

Too involved and overly critical analyses of an author's style, character development, descriptive passages, etc., do not help to develop literary interests and tastes or to broaden pupils' experiences. In fact, the opposite may result.

The specific reading comprehension skills, both literal and critical, that are vital to each content field should be developed systematically. And provision should be made for an adequate supply of necessary concepts and a rich background of information.

In order to determine what concepts, understandings, and skills are basic, the teacher has merely to refer to professional texts on reading or the subject matter itself. (5, 6, 10, 11, 17, 22). The majority of such sources discuss some aspects of these topics. A compilation from several sources would probably be superior to a listing from one source.

Additional and valuable information can be derived from a careful analysis of what pupils do as they (1) study and acquire knowledge, (2) develop and apply comprehension skills, and (3) experience difficulty with reading comprehension or application of what is read.

The lack of space prohibits a complete survey or reproduction of the concepts, understandings, and abilities basic to each subject matter area. For purposes of illustration, possible listings of specific comprehension abilities basic to reading and understanding social studies and science materials are presented:

1. Social Studies

Grasp the general meaning of a selection.

Interpret figurative language.

Understand the many abstract and complex ideas.

Locate information.

Organize and summarize.

Discriminate between relevant and irrelevant material.

Differentiate between fact and opinion.

Recognize the mood, tone, or intent of the author.

Interpret maps, graphs, and other pictorial representations.

2. Science

Note details carefully.

Read analytically.

Interpret formulae, tables, charts, diagrams, etc.

Perform a specific problem.

Follow directions.

Recognize the steps in an experiment.

Visualize what is read.

Identify cause and effect relationships.

Classify ideas.

The above abilities are characteristic of the particular curriculum areas named. Typical reading comprehension skills basic to all content fields were presented earlier in this discussion. Both are necessary to adequate reading ability in subject matter fields.

Summary

The foregoing discussion on reading comprehension in the content fields points out:

1. Since reading is a basic tool for learning, the inability to comprehend printed materials adequately inter-

feres with a student's ability to achieve in content areas.

2. The reading process is a highly complex one, consisting of many skills and abilities. Some are more or less common to all content fields while others are more specific to particular content areas. Therefore, one reading test is not adequate for appraising the comprehension skills necessary to all reading activities.

3. Reading skills should be developed and applied systematically in every content field at all school levels. Daily learning activities with subject matter materials provide the best opportunity for developing these skills.

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How Can We Develop Reading Study Skills For the Different Curriculum Areas?

*by Leo Fay
School of Education
Indiana University
Bloomington, Indiana*

THE dictionary tells us that study is the "process of acquiring by one's own effort knowledge or information of a particular subject." Thus whenever a reader approaches printed material for the purpose of gaining information or for developing understandings, he uses his reading skills in a study situation. When reading study skills are discussed, the discussion is limited too often to the mechanical finding and manipulation of materials and the organization of information thus gathered. Actually the study situation is of much broader scope.

Study is a personal process so that the teacher must be aware of the individual student and what he brings to the study situation. He dare not neglect the "by one's own effort" in the above definition of study.

Reading is the major tool of study in our present school programs. Therefore, it is important to see the application of basic reading skills in specialized study situations. Materials represent the sources from which the learner builds his new understandings. Before raw materials can be processed they must be readily usable. Efficiency in the use of materials is, therefore, an essential part of the total picture.

Different subject areas offer an-

other problem. For just as lumber and apples are not processed in the same way, social studies and science can not be studied in identical ways. Thus thoughtful teachers at all levels in the school program, recognize skill in study as involving factors within the student, reading skills, use of materials, and specialized techniques for the various areas of the curriculum.

Factors Within the Individual

The most important single ingredient in the study situation is, of course, the individual child. Much of his effectiveness in study will be dependent upon his attitudes and the degree to which he is able to discipline himself for study. The child who reacts negatively to school is in effect trying to play a very difficult game with his hands tied.

Positive motivation is fundamental to effective study. Children who possess a strong desire and respect for knowledge, who have within themselves a compulsion for knowing, will find study easier. Included would be such things as:

1. A positive attitude toward school, study and reading.
2. The attitude that work and study activities can be fun.
3. The attitude that study is some-

thing to be done by one's own effort.

4. A strong desire to possess knowledge and a dissatisfaction with lack of knowledge and vague understandings.

5. The ability to start a task and see it through to completion.

6. The ability to free one's self from distractions and concentrate on the job being done.

7. A firm and realistic faith in one's ability.

Related to the problem of attitude and self-discipline is that of purpose. Attitude builds a "feeling for study" whereas purpose goes on to give direction to study. When study is directed by purpose, it is problem centered. Without purpose, it tends to be material centered.

Effective study is to a large extent dependent upon general reading ability. It is rather simple minded, therefore, to expect a high level of study performance if a student is significantly handicapped in his reading.

Skill in recognizing words, word meanings, and the comprehension abilities form the base upon which study is built. The problem for the teacher is to match the child's power in these fundamentals with what is required of him in study situations. This is complicated by the fact that study will of necessity take the child beyond his textbooks to other reading materials that are often not as readable and consequently more difficult for the child.

A fourth part of what the individual brings to study is the ability to work with others on the solution of problems. Sharing tasks, assuming appropriate responsibility, planning

with others, and the give and take that goes with working together are the important skills to be watched here.

Reading Skills in Study

Since reading is a major tool of learning, reading skills must be applied to the study situation. If a child approaches study with a purpose, the nature of his reading will be determined to a large degree by that purpose. Related is the readability of the material and the content being studied. Skill must be developed in the ability to adjust the reading to the child's purposes, the difficulty of the material, and the nature of the content. The key to the entire problem is to create study situations in which children have well-defined and clearly understood purposes for what they read.

In the process of reading the child must be able to follow the author's reasoning and then react to what he reads. The task is to think for yourself while at the same time you follow the thinking of the author. To follow the author's thinking the reader uses various clues, such as:

1. Key sentences, direct statements, summaries.

2. Paragraphing.

3. Format clues such as: special type, indentations, marginal and section headings.

In the process of using these clues he may underline, outline, reread, or occasionally stop in his reading and review what he has read.

If in his study the reader is concerned only with what the author says, he will soon find himself at the

mercy of the printed page. His thinking must be extended to reacting to, challenging and interpreting what is read. Students must be shown that there is more to study than merely reading the pages of an assignment. Challenging an author will involve looking for appropriateness of assumptions, adequateness of supporting evidence and relevance of particular information for the reader's purpose. The thoughtful reader must recognize that as he brings himself into what he reads it is important for him to understand his own biases.

The purposes set for study, the nature of the questions asked and the use of a variety of topics and materials are all important considerations for the teacher who is trying to develop power in reacting critically to what is read. Current and controversial issues should be studied occasionally so that students may have an opportunity to reconcile differences of opinion and gain insight into some of their personal limitations that might distort understanding.

Content also plays its role in the thinking phase of study. Each subject matter area has its unique framework of facts and concepts. Within this framework interrelationships are as essential as facts for real understanding to take place. Therefore, as the student gains new information, he must be able to fit it into the body of information he already possesses. If this is not done, the result of his study is verbalized memorization and not true understanding.

Study is not complete, therefore, in arithmetic, in social studies, or in science until the student builds the in-

formation he possesses into an interrelated structure. Understanding geography isn't the mere listing of thousands of facts but includes an understanding of these facts as they relate to one another.

After the student has read with understanding and has reacted to what he has read, the problem becomes that of making use of what he reads. This is determined to a large degree by his purposes for reading and will usually involve some organization and retention of what has been learned through reading. Organization is built upon the relationships among ideas, and retention is dependent to a large degree upon the completeness of understanding present. Material can be organized for use by:

1. Listing or summarizing ideas or events.
2. Arranging directions in proper sequence.
3. Outlining on the basis of various relationships such as, time, place, general-specific, main and subordinate ideas.
4. Classifying information into various categories.
5. Selecting and noting relevant information.
6. Making graphical representations.

The ability to remember is based upon a clear understanding of what was read coupled with some need for using the information gathered. The end of study, therefore, is not the mere reading of material but includes making use of what has been learned.

Use of Materials

Skill in the use of materials is a

vital part of any program that attempts to build independence in study. This skill involves not only the effective use of any given resource but also an appreciation and understanding of what resource to turn to for any given information. As is true of all phases of the reading program, effective use of materials is developmental with teachers at all levels. Skill should be developed in the use of many materials.

Skill in the use of the dictionary. No one can be an effective, independent reader until he has mastered the use of the dictionary. It is the ultimate source for checking the pronunciation and meanings of words. Until it is mastered the reader must be satisfied with either not knowing or with the necessity of asking someone else.

Mastery of the dictionary is a slow and difficult process for most students. The number of college students who have difficulty using a dictionary effectively is evidence enough that developing skill in its use merits more attention.

Dictionaries can be used in all grades. Picture dictionaries can make the start. As the child grows in his ability of word study, more complex dictionaries can be introduced. This should be continued until at the high school level some contact at least is made with an unabridged dictionary. A complete description of a dictionary skill program can be found in Gray's *On Their Own in Reading*.¹

Skill in handling books. There is much more to a book than the text.

1. Gray, William S., *On Their Own in Reading*. Chicago: Scott Foresman Co., 1948.

Even the first grader begins to discover this when he starts to use the table of contents in his primer. A good student should be able to make effective use of the title page, preface, table of contents, general organization of the book, glossary, index, footnotes, and bibliography.

Skill in the use of the library. The library must be used if skill in its use is to be developed. In the primary grades it will be used primarily as a source for pleasure reading. In the middle and upper grades the library will be used increasingly for resource and reference work. In the process of using the library the child should develop:

a. A positive attitude toward the library and an understanding of how the library can be used.

b. The ability to locate materials readily by means of the card catalog.

c. The ability to use such references as encyclopedias, atlases, almanacs, biographic digests, such as *Who's Who*, indices and guides such as the *Readers Guide*.

Skill in using summary and graphic devices such as maps, graphs, charts and tables. Because of the concentration of information presented and also because of the quantitative thinking required these devices are difficult for most children.

Skill in using pictures and pictorial representations. It sometimes appears that children actually regress in this ability. Pictures can be made use of throughout the grades. As they are used, problems of interpretation can be dealt with. They can be used to stimulate imagery as well as build understanding.

Pictorial representation developed by the children is an extension of the use of pictures. On the basis of information gained in their study, they become producers of pictures, murals, etc. A teacher's manual for one of the primary grade readers will give many excellent suggestions for building skill in the use of pictures.

It is soon apparent that no single textbook could possibly build all of these skills. A carpenter does not develop skill with a jack plane or a saw by working only with a hammer. Children will develop skill with various materials only as they use those materials. Hence, they must have educational experiences that make it necessary for them to use the library and a variety of materials.

Study in Different Curriculum Areas

Study in different curriculum areas presents some real problems to the student. Specialized meanings of common words and technical vocabularies cause much trouble.

A simple experiment will point this out rather dramatically. List some of the basic vocabulary used in arithmetic and then check your children for real understanding. If you aren't satisfied with pat answers, you will soon appreciate the difficulties.

In addition, the material also varies widely from one content area to another and will call for specialized skills. For example, in one series of arithmetic books a child must refer to previous problems and to a picture for the data to complete some of the problems. The reading required for this is quite different from that required in the social studies period.

Part of the readiness phase of reading assignments in the various curriculum areas is to prepare children to meet the reading problems they will encounter. These may include vocabulary, assumptions on the part of the author that children cannot meet, the purpose for which the lesson is to be read, and problems of interpretation.²

Implications, Problems and Suggestions

Study skills develop gradually and are rightfully the concern of teachers at all levels. The kindergarten teacher who has children put toys and materials away according to a certain order, the first grade teacher who has children classify objects in pictures, and the high school science teacher working with the classification of insects are all working with the same basic skill at different levels of development. The fundamental study skills are to be found at all grade levels.

To be functional, skills must be developed through use. Talk usually develops skill only in talking. Study involves thinking and use of materials. These can best be developed by putting children into situations where they have real purposes for thinking and for using materials effectively. A list of words to be looked up in the dictionary or topics to be located in an encyclopedia do not meet this criterion.

Direct teaching of basic skills is needed in the situations in which they are to be used. This means that no

2. For detailed suggestions see Appendix D of McCullough, Constance M., Strang, Ruth; and Traxler, Arthur E., *Problems in the Improvement of Reading*.

teacher dare think only of the content being taught while assuming that children are efficient in the skills necessary to effectively learn that content. Both content and study skills are important. Children will have to be shown how to read for a given purpose, how to read maps, graphs, charts, and tables, how to locate and use materials when they encounter the need for doing these things. Teaching social studies or science or math would, therefore, include teaching the skills important for study in a given area as well as the content for that area. Starry has made an extensive experimental study of the development of study skills at the sixth grade level.³ She found that direct teaching resulted in markedly greater improvement for her experimental groups than was true for the control groups which did not have the benefit of direct teaching.

Continued practice is necessary if a high level of skill is to be developed and maintained. It is never safe to assume that because a particular skill has been taught before that children can be expected to have no trouble with it. A concert pianist would never expect to remain accomplished without continued practice. A teacher must continue practice if children are to be accomplished in their use of the study skills.

Instruction in the study skills must be individualized to meet the varying needs and abilities found in any group of children. This is unquestionably the most difficult part of the

entire job and the most challenging to a teacher's creativity. To meet this challenge the teacher must know the capabilities and needs of his children, he must possess a good insight into the learning sequence of the various skills, and finally he must so organize his learning activities that adjustments can be made to individuals. The problem for the teacher is to find the ways in which he can relate performance to the ability to perform.

A practical first step for doing this is to make a diagnostic survey of the student's present status in the study skills. "The Iowa Every-Pupil Test of Basic Skills, Test B: Work-Study Skills,"⁴ is a standardized test that can be used for this purpose or the teacher can develop informal tests of his own to measure specific skills of importance for the work being done in his classroom. By analyzing the performance of the class and of individual children on the various items of the survey tests, the teacher gains valuable information for adjusting instruction to the needs of different children.

Often the teacher becomes overly impressed with the limitations of a few students and as a result simplifies the work for all children. This is a very practical danger and could lead to underdevelopment among the average and better students. Actually a survey as suggested here should lead to demanding more of the more able as well as simplifying work for the child who finds himself confused and unable to do the work.

4. Published by Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.

3. Starry, Alvina F., "A Study of the Development of the Basic Study Skills of Sixth Grade Pupils in Polk County Wisconsin." Unpublished Master's Thesis, Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota, 1950.

Materials are a critical part of a successful study program. Before learning can be guided beyond a single textbook other materials must be available. Actually more materials are available in the schools than the teachers in most schools are aware of. A twofold attack on the materials problem would be:

1. To know what is available in the school.
2. To become a "squeaking wheel" for the materials not available. Teachers must learn to take the initiative and ask for what they want.

The study skills include the student's use of himself, his general reading ability, his ability to read and think effectively in the various content areas and skill in the use of materials. A complete study skills program is concerned with development in all four parts.

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"Must" Reading for Teachers

The Wonderful World of Books is a volume every teacher will want to own and recommend to parents. Briefly this is a friendly, helpful guide to the pleasures of reading. Here sixty-seven experts—authorities in education, librarians and farm leaders—share their reading experiences in a sort of forum of the printed page. The contributions cover every major aspect of books and reading—from instilling a love of books in children to tips on the best methods of buying and borrowing books.

This is a non-profit book. It is available in a 35¢ Mentor Edition of The New American Library, 501 Madison Ave., New York 22. The book was prepared through the cooperative efforts of an impressive list of national organizations including the Adult Education Association of the U.S.A., the American Book Publishers Council, the American Library Association, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the U. S. Department of Agriculture Extension Service.

Teachers will be particularly interested in the chapters "Teen-Agers Read for Fun" by Margaret C. Scoggin, "When We Are Very Young" by Nora Beust, and "I'll Tell You a Story."

Critical Reading is Creative Reading And Needs Creative Teaching

by Joseph C. Gainsberg
Principal, William Cowper Junior High School
Queens, New York City

THE TERM critical reading is perhaps not sufficiently accurate to describe its nature. It attempts to point out, somewhat subtly, that there are two distinctly different types of reading. First there is the casual, indifferent, effortless reading—usually the kind indulged in when in a hurry to find out how the hero will be rescued from the cliff, or when carelessly glancing through the latest news account of war progress, or when reading a required assignment with one eye on the clock in order to be in time for the movie.

It is clear that, while we may snatch some meaning from such reading, there is no danger that we will overstuff our minds with what we get. This is *not* critical reading. Of course we may be matching all speed records and may even be inviting arrest for exceeding the speed limit, but rate of reading is not at issue here.

On the other hand, however, we sometimes read more carefully, more searchingly. We get more and richer meanings not only about what the author said but about what he really *meant* by what he said. We get some inferences from hints dropped; some recognition of what the author may have omitted, deliberately or by chance; some awareness of the author's shrewdness or naivete; a

glimpse of the significance of some half-buried remark as it suddenly throws light on a personal problem; some evaluation of the writer's frankness or sincerity or slant. This is indeed critical reading.

Critical Reading Is Creative

The word "critical", however, evokes an image of someone shaking a finger at the author. That meaning is not intended, although criticism of the author might be an element in some critical reading. The interpretation intended is allied to the expression "critical *thinking*" or "critical *reasoning*" and we have reference therefore to reading with a thoughtful attitude. I suggest several other terms that may perhaps be employed more appropriately, namely:

- Reflective reading
- Active reading
- Interpretive reading
- Creative reading

Of these, the last is my favorite. Actually, the act of creation takes place in this kind of reading because the reader becomes a co-author as he goes on. He keeps adding to what the author writes. He adds his enrichment of meaning, he visualizes, he recalls experiences from his own life that confirm or deny certain statements, he sees their relevance to other

current conditions, he decides what he is willing to accept, he guesses ahead (even if some guesses are wrong), perhaps he catches the author in some blunder.

In short, he is truly creating a richer article than the author ever intended—richer at least for the reader. He enjoys his reading all the more because he has made a challenging game of it. It is like a game of tennis. Imagine how dull a tennis game would be if you merely sat on a bench at the base line and struck occasionally, and lazily too, only at the balls that came your way. But see how different the game becomes when you play it with energy, trying for everything you can possibly reach. So with creative reading, which you appreciate all the more when you are active in it, and swing at every clue the author throws at you.

Not Only for Advanced Readers

It would really be too bad if, from the description thus far, any one were led to believe that this kind of reading is only for the elite, and that even they indulge in such extravagance only rarely. That impression would be entirely erroneous, for the need for interpretive reading takes place as far down as the primary grades. Readers of the first grade are expected to figure out what happened to Henny Penny's friends when they went into Foxy Woxy's hole and never came out again. Some first graders might believe it was the cozy atmosphere of the hole that kept them there, but it should not take long for the teacher to guide them into a better deduction.

In a third grade reader, we read

that the Pied Piper, having successfully piped all the rats into oblivion, now comes to the mayor for his payment. The mayor, with a smug smile, replies that since he only played and did not work, he deserves no gulden. The piper does not smile, but turns away and leaves. This is the point at which the teacher needs to ask the children to ponder on the significance of that unsmiling face, and possibly to make some anticipatory guesses.

No, it is not true that critical reading is limited to the elite.

Nor is it true that such reading should be expected only under unusual conditions and attended by heroic effort. The good reader (although I admit that at present there are too few of him) engages in this kind of reading during most of his reading time, and for all reading that he regards as worthwhile. Nor does it tax him in any way, for he makes his inferences with but imperceptible pauses. And when he does pause, he finds relish in re-living an appropriate and parallel experience, or in other creativity. Yes, I suppose you might call it reading with effort, but if it is effort, it is certainly pleasant effort rather than painful, and it permits a richness of understanding and keen appreciation.

Most students at the secondary school level, and many below that level, could be led to acquire the ability to read critically or creatively. It requires teaching techniques to develop interpretational skills, techniques that are a far cry from the all-too-frequent recommendation of "letting" children learn by their own reading. These skills are not attained

merely by wide reading. A dependence on the magic of the books themselves is inadequate to teach children the subtle mental processes involved in creative reading and in the finer levels of appreciation.

Related to Appreciation

It is not by mere chance that creative reading and appreciation were paired together in the same sentence, for there is a rapport that binds them inseparably. Creative reading derives inferences from context and makes numerous implications about them. The enriched meaning thus obtained produces appreciation.

Naturally we tend to think of appreciation as being limited to literature. And appreciation of literature, according to many opinions, means enjoyment, pleasure, fun, a reaction which is supposed to be produced by the literary content itself, without the slightest need for effort by the reader. Those opinions are justified, however, only when we consider appreciation at its *lowest level*, for appreciation can take place at a number of levels.

Levels of Appreciation

To explain these levels, let us for a moment consider football and the ways in which it might be appreciated. For most of the audience in the stadium, even the most uninitiated, there is a great deal of tense enjoyment in watching a player break from the scrimmage and run with the ball, chased by a whole team. In a moment he is caught and violently thrown while a half dozen players pile on top of him. This is action. This is excitement. This is thrilling. No one

needs an education in appreciation to appreciate this scene.

But to certain other fans, another scene was taking place. They watched the formation of the opposing team and knew that it was anticipating a run through the center. When the anticipation was confirmed, they observed the line-up neatly blocking the "interferers" who might have helped the runner, and they saw the strategy unfolding that placed other blocks in the potential path of the runner and that downed him before he had gone three yards.

There was less cheering by this second type of fan, but a great deal more quiet satisfaction and a pleased feeling with his own mental alertness. This, too, was appreciation. It ignored the obvious, the grossly exciting, and concentrated with understanding on the subtle values. So football, too, has its levels of appreciation, the uninformed and the informed.

In music we all respond, of course, to the tom-tom of the jungle beat that marks all jazz, or, in the case of dance music, the regular beat of the accompaniment that carries over the many variations of rhythm in the melody. It sets our toes a-dancing even while we are sitting. It is appreciated because it tugs at the native roots of our emotions. But it takes no learning to respond to it. It is appreciation at the low level. It is different in the case of music which depends for its appeal on delicate nuances of melody, or harmony, or rhythm, or timbre, or the artistic combination of them. But it takes learning, even if it is self-learning, to develop appreciation at this upper level. Self-learning, how-

ever, even at best, is haphazard and uneconomical.

So it is with literature. The great majority of young readers, even the so-called good readers among them, find appreciation only in the action, violence and suspense offered by their stories. "What's going to happen next" is the great driving force. True, this is appreciation—one kind of appreciation. There is another kind that seeks eagerly to obtain a more enriched, more comprehensive understanding of their reading, for literature is literally filled with meanings not stated by the author at all. He does not inform us that a character is a scoundrel; he permits us to find out, though somewhat gradually, through what he does, what he says, what others say to him, or how they react to him. His very conversation doesn't mean what it says, so that we have to read between the lines to infer what he really means. In other words, facts, hidden or partially hidden, are revealed to us only by our own thinking and interpretation. The author rarely tells us that a woman is angry, but we sense the fact when we read of her clenched fingers and the white prints left in her palm by her finger nails.

Similarly we use clues to permit us to follow the character as he changes or develops. We become aware of his motives even when no one has actually expressed them. We learn to visualize his very appearance, and we can, with guidance, even learn to hear, mentally, the very voice and expression of the characters as they speak—the coldly polite tone, the sneering contempt, the whining voice

of cowardice and fear, the haughty anger. This ability to "audize," if I may be permitted the coining of a much needed term, adds immeasurably to appreciation.

Then, of course, there are numerous hints that permit us to guess ahead, and there is considerable satisfaction when we find we have guessed correctly. Sometimes these hints are found in a single clue word or phrase. More often they can be reconstructed from our knowledge of the character types and their motives and the probable results when certain clashing motives meet head on. The reader's personal reactions to the characters and his changing sympathies as he follows shifts in their actions and motives all add to his increasing appreciation. He can also, as a good reader, recognize the author's merit in his treatment of the story. Are the characters genuine, or only stick-figures? Are the situations and events the plausible results of preceding events and motives, or does the author place a heavy reliance on contrived coincidences?

Ability to Read with Interpretation

We have seen, therefore, the higher ranges of appreciation, of critical action, creative reading. It may not always be exciting, but it is far more satisfying and far more vivid to the mind. However, it is not acquired easily. It takes learning, even effort, but it is well worth it. Furthermore, within the scope of his reading vocabulary and ideational understanding, it is within the grasp of the poorer reader as well, and it can enliven his sense of appreciation, too.

When one has acquired some of this interpretational skill, there is a tendency to lift one's taste in fiction more or less in accordance with the order indicated below:

- from stories of adventure, action and incident.

- to stories of character and character development.

- to stories of background and ways of life different from our own.

- to stories with complex plot.

- to stories of mood.

- to stories of problems, social and other.

These are certainly not presented in any precise order, but they represent a kind of hierarchy of taste and discrimination that shows an up-grading of appreciation, rather than a contentment with the level of the adventure story.

However, none of this improvement in appreciation is likely to result from "just reading." If we follow such a principle, we continue to provide children with books at their present level of ability and interest. We may be pleased that they are reading, but they may remain forever at the same level, despite continued reading. Even in the case of those pupils who are reading better books, we may be getting the misleading impression that their appreciation is greater. Yet they may be reading those books only for incident and action, skipping and missing all the inferences that clarify character, purpose, trends and the like. These children might just as well get their stories from the comic strip booklets; it would be much more economical of time and effort.

No, extensive reading is a desirable

habit, but it falls short of developing critical reading. On the contrary, it is likely to accomplish the very reverse, for it encourages rapid reading. And rapid reading is unfriendly to critical reading, and therefore also to genuine appreciation.

Literature vs.

Straightforward Writing

What is needed by the reader is the ability (or appreciative skills) to recognize the clues left scattered by the author, and to translate them into interpretations instead of passing them by blithely and blindly. He needs those skills, and he also needs time, the time gained by some slowing down of his reading rate or by occasional pauses as he reflects over a memory-stirring phrase, or by an occasional chuckle of satisfaction as he finds an earlier guess suddenly confirmed by the turn of events. His reading rate resembles the continental habit of drinking which permits man to savor the taste as he slowly sips an aged brandy. The common method of reading literature, even good literature is rather like the more common method of drinking, characterized by the phrase "down the hatch"!

Actually, in the absence of such interpretations and inferences, much of literature becomes meaningless. If a story is read only for its literal meaning, a great portion of it—anywhere from fifty to seventy per cent—fails to be understood. Authors tend to use every artifice to avoid straightforward statements, relying instead largely on indirect methods. "From one rusty nail on the back of a hall bedroom door," writes one author,

"hung all the wardrobe she possessed." Immediately we obtain, through the clever selection of one striking detail, a picture of abject poverty, of a dingy room, of a discouraged girl in a cheap boarding house. Why didn't the author say so directly then? Not to mislead us. His purpose was rather to challenge our imagination, to arouse vivid imagery, to prevent the disinterest that would have been the reaction to a matter-of-fact presentation.

Comic strip artists, of course, employ direct statement and exaggerated pictorial presentation to make obvious disclosures about characters and their motives. But that's because their appeal is to the immature mind.

Permit me again, even at the cost of repetition, to emphasize that the quality of appreciation is thin if without rich understanding, and that the great proportion of the understanding of literature lies not in what the author says, but in *what he does not say*, and in the reader's responses of thought and feeling that he himself contributes to the author's content. If it is at all possible to summarize the explanation of so complex a process within a single sentence, then it is that sentence.

Suggestions for Method

There are naturally so many differences among the vast number of clues offered by authors that each clue, whether phrase or situation, seems entirely individual in nature. At first impression, therefore, it would appear impossible to find enough similarities among them to organize them into groups. Yet to present children with

a confusing mass of varied clues would only result in baffling them. We can do better by directing their thinking toward one aspect of inference at a time, or one type of clue, and help them to acquire some criterion by which to recognize that type and respond to it appropriately. In this process we will be developing the skills of appreciation which can then begin to be employed with growing independence. The more skills, the greater the capacity for independent appreciation.

A careful analysis of clues, based upon experiences in which large numbers of children have displayed considerable success, discloses many possibilities for the organization of clues into groups. One such group will refer to character description, and we shall illustrate from this group. Almost every story offers clues of appearance that give hints of character ("shrewd and sharp eyes, but a mouth that curled upward at the corners," "eyes that gleamed coldly under shaggy eyebrows"). There are things *said* to the character, about him, by him. There are his actions. Major actions are easily recognizable, but there are also subtle actions ("his lips tightened," "his chin rose," "he glanced down"). There are ways in which others respond to him (with fear or distrust, or tenderness).

In the one aspect of character quality, we can find fairly specific types of clues. Pupils can be led toward concentration, during a series of lessons with a number of stories, on this one kind of clue. Even though they range from simple to difficult and even though no two are identical, there is

usually enough similarity to permit such emphasis.

Similarly, other types of clues fall conveniently into groups and may be developed in the same way.

In the cause of brevity, I shall merely list the types of appreciational skills that should be developed.

Finding inferences about

- character
- appearance
- setting
- motives of the characters
- their actions
- their feelings
- anticipations
- the meaning of figurative language

Recognizing clues from which inferences may be drawn

- conversation by, to, and about a character
- his actions, gross and subtle
- few but suggestive details
- emotional words and connotative expressions
- figurative language, especially irony and exaggeration
- forebodings
- unusual language style (choppy sentences or telescoping of events to show haste; sentence inversion for word emphasis)

Of course the list is far from complete, but it contains enough to help any resourceful teacher. The teacher's task is one of bringing to the attention of her pupils these clues and helping them in their efforts to derive inferences. As explained earlier, it is best to concentrate on one type at a time, thus enabling the student to seek and recognize more readily the added understanding in

that type. This is accomplished by questions, of course, but questions that tend to rouse curiosity and eagerness to think about possible answers.

In any given story it will be neither advisable nor possible to *limit* one's questions to a single type of inference or clue. Other questions will inevitably arise, stimulated by the story itself. They will help also to maintain the continuity of and interest in the plot. Nevertheless there should be an *emphasis* on the one type being studied, largely by finding many instances of that type. Questions on other types may be limited or touched on only incidentally.

Will this slow down the reading? Naturally. It will even break up the story at many points. But let us face the fact that these interruptions are vitally necessary for the purpose of learning to appreciate. Reading for easy enjoyment alone may be left for other stories and other occasions.

But do these interruptions necessarily interfere with appreciation or with pleasure in the reading? On the contrary, the teacher who learns this technique will find her class more excited and more enthusiastic about such reading than ever before. The taste of *complete* understanding and of mental responses never made before is a thrilling experience to them. The added understandings are well worth the time they take.

In Conclusion

A competent reader recognizes and interprets clues with little or no slowing down of his reading although that depends of course upon the difficulty of the content. Certainly Browning's

poetry cannot be read effectively at normal speed. However, whether slow or fast, the reader does his interpreting while in the very act of reading, rather than after he has completed the novel or play. That points the way in which pupils need to be taught how to read for appreciation, namely, by interpretations in the very course of reading.

Since children are only at the stage of learning how to interpret, the pace must be considerably slowed, with pauses and even interruptions, while the teacher guides them in recognizing the numerous places where their thinking has to supply what the author has deliberately left unsaid.

In these pauses they can also develop the habit of searching for personal experiences or current conditions that give richer meaning to a given incident, and for their own emotional responses that yield deeper appreciation of their reading. As this process goes on, and as children are encouraged to engage more and more independently in these processes, they will tend to acquire skill and ease in reading interpretively, and they will achieve the precious goal we so earnestly seek—a genuine love for good literature, a preference for it, and skill in the process of critical reading.

On Critical Reading

Kay, Sylvia C. *Reading Critically* (in the Fields of Literature and History). New York: Twayne Publishers, 1952. Pp. 166. \$2.50.

ACCORDING to the author, this book has two aims: to supply much needed

material in the field of critical reading; and to present this reading material in accordance with the newer methods evolving in our schools.

The book is divided into two sections—Reading in the Field of Literature and Reading in the Field of History.

Each of these sections is divided into four parts: (1) The Ability to Form Our Own Conclusions, (2) The Ability to Discover the Author's Conclusion, (3) The Ability to Discover Biases in the Conclusions of Different Authors, and (4) The Ability to Find Inaccuracies and Omissions in the Writings of Authors. In each of the eight chapters there are nine exercises, consisting of excerpts from well known literary and historical writings, followed by three questions.

In the hands of the author this is undoubtedly an excellent workbook. The selections are well chosen, and the questions are certainly designed to lead the student to think about what he has read. However, the book would be much more useful if the teacher's guide had been expanded.

The major weaknesses in this book are the lack of development of the theory of the methods, the lack of a complete guide for teachers, and the absence of enough explanatory material for the students.

The value of the book lies in the excellence of the passages chosen and the well developed questions which aid the student in developing his critical reaction to material read. Dr. Kay has designed the material for high school students. It might also be useful in reading and English classes for college freshmen.

Reading on Their Own Means Reading at Their Growing Edges

by Leland B. Jacobs
*School of Education
Ohio State University
Columbus, Ohio*

THE AMERICAN school's responsibility to teach children to read is an ever-present and ever-urgent one. The American way of life is dependent upon a citizenry so well informed that every man can make decisions concerning the common welfare—decisions that are based on available facts and are permeated with a philosophy of freedom and democratic action. The American way of life is also dependent upon a citizenry that is culturally alert and appreciative of the values of aesthetics in contributing to personal fulfillment and in making life good. Because reading contributes so directly to basic personal and societal needs, the school is emphatically charged with teaching all of the children of all of the people to read.

In assuming this responsibility, schools and school systems have used diverse approaches and methods, all aimed at that goal of making every child as proficient in reading as is possible. In some schools, teachers still pin their hopes for success on oral reading of basal textbooks, paragraph by paragraph, around the class, day by day. In some schools, teachers statically group children, according to test results, for teaching specific reading skills. In some schools—probably the best schools of today—reading is viewed as more than correct

word calling, more than a collection of specific skills.

In the modern school, the teaching of reading is viewed as including balanced experiences in reading that provide children with many competences and many uses for their skills and abilities in unlocking the printed page. Thus in the modern school one finds creative teachers giving children purposeful activities in experience-chart reading and book reading; in oral reading and silent reading; in reading and re-reading; in work-type reading and recreational reading; in group reading and individual reading; in guided developmental reading and independent reading.

For it is out of a lushness of experiences in various reading situations and with various types of reading materials that the child comes to know what, in its broadest and deepest sense, reading is and can do for the individual and group. This is, perhaps, the great aim of one's teaching of reading—to keep deepening the child's insights into the processes and potentialities of reading and to keep encouraging the child to read on his own, more and more in terms of his purposes and needs.

It goes without saying that the school must take each new generation of children and, at their varied levels

of development and achievement, so guide them that they continue to learn how to read better and better at their "growing edges." But there is a great parallel to this program of directly teaching children the skills and abilities of reading. That parallel is found in the independent reading program which the modern school provides. As the child is taught new skills and abilities, the independent use of these reading acquisitions actually becomes the test of one's teaching.

Thus the independent reading opportunities provided to children are an integral part of the total reading program, and one of the most significant avenues to the evaluation of one's teaching success. Surely a teacher is doing a superior job of making reading significant in boys' and girls' lives in those classrooms where children demonstrate a desire to read; where children seek out opportunities to use various types of reading materials; where children turn to reading for information, ideas, enjoyment, and personal satisfactions; where children are developing in appreciation and taste in literature.

What are some of the dimensions of a modern independent reading program? Let us consider this question in terms of what a teacher can do in his classroom.

Books in the Classroom

In the first place, there needs to be a well-balanced room library of well-written, attractive books for children to read on their own. Even where there is a school library, books need to be borrowed from the central col-

lection for room use. The closer the hand is to a captivating title and an appealing format the more likely the child is to read.

Of course, for the most part, this room library will include trade books rather than textbooks—children's literature at appropriately diversified levels of difficulty in concepts, themes, structure, and language. It will include some books that are more transitory, popular reading fare and others that represent content of more permanent value. The wise teacher sees to it that from the vast richness of American children's literature there is a balance of modern and time-honored or "classic" literature; of fictional and factual literature; of fanciful and realistic literature; of prose and poetry.

Moreover, the room collection should not be static. Children should know that new books are appearing in the room library from time to time: books that are for sheer enjoyment or escape; books that explore the child's personal living; books that expand the child's social understandings; books which extend or deepen his interests, avocations, or talents. As reading abilities and skills are improved, as tastes deepen, as studies extend intellectual horizons, the teacher ascertains the qualities necessary to keep the children reading independently and provides the literature that is entertaining, illuminating, and challenging to the mind and spirit of the maturing child.

In the second place, the room library is planned and developed by the children and the teacher. What children are actively working to

create is what really touches them where they live. If the library corner is to become an effectual aspect of the daily living of the group, it must genuinely belong to the group. Thus, the children need the experience of working with books, of arranging books, of checking books in and out, of making displays of books by themes, topics, or interests.

Moreover, children can make displays of book jackets and original drawings and posters stimulated by reading. They can peruse catalogs and bibliographies such as *A Bibliography of Books for Children*¹ from the Association for Childhood Education International or *Adventures in Reading*² from the National Council of Teachers of English for recommendations for further acquisitions. Certainly there is more likelihood that books will be read if they are a daily acquaintance of their potential consumers.

Time for Independent, Recreational Reading

In the daily program, time must be set aside for periods devoted to independent, recreational reading. In many modern classrooms, reading is a choice during independent work periods. Or free reading is encouraged while the teacher works with a group in guided developmental reading activities. Or certain times in the week are reserved for free reading for everyone in the room—even the

teacher. Or independent reading is recognized as a splendid way to utilize time when other school tasks have been completed in less time than is provided.

Unless time is available for carrying on recreational reading at school, no amount of admonition that independent reading is valuable and delightful will impress children. They learn early that actions speak louder than words. As Kilpatrick has said, children "learn what they live and live what they learn."

Sharing Reading Pleasures

To encourage love of reading the teacher will read to the group for entertainment and pleasure. Print can leap from the page through oral interpretation. To hear the sound of old Blind Pew tapping his way up to the Admiral Benbow Inn, to hear how Laura and Mary spent Christmas in *The Little House on the Prairie*, to hear the "Riddle Chapter" in *This Boy Cody* brings out the full flavor and import of these books. Since the teacher's time for reading to the group is limited, he must be selective. Not just any book that happens to be handy deserves such precious time. Only those books that have integrity and beauty deserve the lasting impression which reading aloud can give them.

Too, the teacher may well read up in taste and vocabulary from the present level of the group—not too far up but just enough to keep the children growing.

Sometimes, too, the teacher can "sample" books with the children by reading to them a description, an

1. *Bibliography of Books for Children*. Association for Childhood Education International, 1200 15th St., N. W., Washington 5, D. C. \$1.00.

2. *Adventures in Reading*. National Council of Teachers of English, 211 W. 68th St., Chicago 21, Ill.

episode, a chapter, or a conversation. In this way the child gets a clue to what the whole book may be like; he gets hunches as to whether or not he would like to read this book in its entirety. As the teacher reads to the group, children further discover the satisfactions and pleasures of the literary experience.

Also children are encouraged to share their reading with their peers. During sharing periods, during reading periods, during periods devoted specifically to the language arts, during specially designated times, children can report to the group concerning what they have been reading on their own.

There are many ways in which teachers encourage children to share their independent reading. A child may review a book for the group. A group of children who have enjoyed the same book may hold a panel discussion about it, or may choose to dramatize a portion of it. Sometimes the children may present to the group, as interpretative oral reading, a favorite scene, a major event, a humorous incident, or an exciting episode from a book which they have greatly enjoyed.

Sometimes the group may discuss what makes a good sports story or horse story or mystery story, drawing on specific books which they have read individually for the bases of their judgments.

Sometimes they may choose to share their independent reading through graphic arts media. They may make posters or paint or draw scenes from favorite stories. They may paint or model from clay or

sculpture with wire favorite story book characters. They may convert a story into a puppet play, or make a "roller movie" of a book.

In those classrooms where children share their independent reading with others, there seems to develop a contagion for reading—a contagion that inoculates the child against possible ravages of other mass media of communication and immunizes the child against the disease of never reading for personal pleasure and fulfillment.

Keeping a Record

There is great advantage in children's keeping cumulative records of their independent reading. By this, I do not mean written book reports, which retell the content so that the teacher can check up on whether the child has read the book. Rather, the cumulative record is for the child's personal evaluation of his reading experiences and for the teacher's guidance of the child's further reading.

Here is a child whose record shows that for six months he has been reading only horse stories, with every indication that he is completely enamored of "horses, horses, horses." As he looks back over this record, there is real personal satisfaction that he has read so much. Also he is able, with his record before him, to pick out which books he liked best, which ones he would recommend to others, what different books contributed to him in ideas, facts, insights, or information.

From the standpoint of the teacher, as he studies the record he is able to ascertain the trends in a child's reading, the amount of reading being done, the maturity of the child's free

reading in level of difficulty and taste, the types of suggestions to make for further reading.

Certain desirable practices in connection with the keeping of cumulative records have been tried out by teachers. Since the reading is personal, the records are also personal—which means that they are not public, they are not competitive. The records are kept on files in a file box, in packets in envelopes, or on commercially-prepared record sheets. They are not posted openly; the child shares his record with his peers only if he has the desire to do so.

The records are not so long and involved that the recording procedures discourage the child from reading independently. Usually they include such information as the date, the title and author, and as much of the content and reaction to the content as the child wishes to include.

When one peruses cumulative rec-

ords, he finds such comments as these: "The best cowboy story I ever read;" "I think I'm much like Janie;" "This book makes me wish I lived in the country;" "I want to read all the books that Phil Stong wrote;" "Dr. Seuss always makes me laugh."

In some schools these reading records have proved so valuable in giving teachers insight into children's reading habits and tastes and into children's interests, desires, and problems that they are passed on to the next teacher as a very important clue to the child's reading accomplishments and behavior. They are deemed significant sources of evaluative evidence for helping a teacher to guide the children into further school activities and experiences.

Reading and Communication Media

Independent reading should be related to rather than divorced from other mass media of communication. In the modern school it is manifestly unfair to extol the virtues of reading and to deride, by comparison, the movies, the radio or television. Children need to learn early that each of these specialized forms of communication has its value and place in their lives, that these values are inter-related rather than discrete; that each may beneficially serve the others.

To teach children what each medium can, at its best, contribute to their living is imperative. To help children to ascertain the special benefits of each medium is desirable. To use recordings, radio broadcasts, movies, and television programs that present a high type of story telling and dramatic presentations of well-known

A.C.E. Booklist

The 1952 *Bibliography of Books for Children* is now available from the Association for Childhood Education International, 1200 15th St., N. W. Washington 6, D.C. Price \$1.00.

Compiled by Leland B. Jacobs, this is by all odds the most helpful and more complete list of books for children. Books are grouped by subject; titles are annotated; grade levels are indicated; Title and author indexes are included.

children's literature encourages children to read, whets their appetites to read the same story that they have seen or heard, leads them to seek out materials on the same theme to peruse at their leisure, guides them to the other works of a given author.

As teachers keep abreast of what is available in these various media of communication, as teachers utilize and discuss these media with children, as teachers use other media as legitimate motivations for further independent reading, they help children to become more discriminative in their understandings of these media and they see more clearly the special benefits which only reading has the power to give.

The Role of the Teacher

Finally—but also inextricably inherent in all the other dimensions—the teacher must be an alert, perceptive, inventive guide in developing and carrying forward a successful independent reading program in his classroom. He understands and has rapport with the children whom he teaches. He keeps abreast of new developments and new publications in the field of children's literature. He is skillful in involving the group in independent reading experiences. He is astute in helping individuals locate materials that meet their individual reading specifications. He is a grower of taste rather than a prescriber of taste.

He is so enthusiastic about acquainting children with new books that his enthusiasm leads children down trails of discovery also. He provides children with significant oppor-

tunities to discuss and make use of ideas gleaned from reading. He sympathetically evaluates with the group and with individuals the progress which is being made in reading for fun.

He interprets the independent reading program to parents and seeks their cooperation in carrying the program, beyond the classroom walls, into the home. In short, he makes independent reading an integral part of school living.

As Strickland has so well said:

"A reader is a person who reads. Teaching children how to read is not the same thing as making readers of children. . . . A reader is not a person who *can* read; a reader is a person who *does* read. . . . If children are to regard reading as an essential part of the pattern of satisfactory living, they must learn to use it as a method of solving problems, of adding the understanding and knowledge they need to attain desired ends, and of increasing the enjoyment, depth, and significance of life itself."¹

A well-conceived program of independent reading contributes markedly to the development of such a reader as Strickland describes. The teacher who would make a distinctive contribution to genuine national literacy is one who not only teaches children how to read but also works dynamically to develop their love of good literature, their enjoyment in reading, and their independence in reading critically and appreciatively for personal-social enlightenment, entertainment, and enrichment.

¹Strickland, Ruth G., *The Language Arts in the Elementary School*. Boston: D. C. Heath and Co., p. 308.

Recent Trends in the Teaching of Reading

by Virgil E. Herrick
School of Education
University of Wisconsin
Madison, Wisconsin

IT IS ALWAYS easy to gaze into a crystal ball and come up with a great deal of wishful thinking about recent trends in reading. Donald Durrell faced the issue squarely in a talk on trends some years ago when he said, "These trends are compounded on hope, extra-sensory perception, and by talking with people who agree with the speaker."

I have attempted to go beyond the sources used by Durrell to develop my list of trends, but I must confess my heavy reliance on the element of hope and my own interpretation of the current scene in reading instruction. While I will want to examine present practices in teaching reading, I will also want to pay major attention to trends in our thinking which may be a bit ahead of our practices and our research.

A major trend in our thinking and practice today is the attention we are paying to the directives of child development for reading instruction. Note the following developments in reading:

Greater attention is given to the importance of teacher-pupil relationships in the teaching of reading. We recognize that the child's sense of worthwhileness should be maintained and not threatened by his efforts to learn to read.

This article is a condensation of the address made by Dr. Herrick at the February 16 meeting of ICIRI during the annual conference of the American Association of School Administrators held at Atlantic City.

In this program the teacher's job is to support and develop the child's increasing independence in the reading situation. Thus there is greater attention to helping the child attack his own reading problems. Rather than blindly and automatically telling him the "word," the teacher tries to substitute methods of word attack the child can use both immediately and on a long-time basis. Here, too, the role of the teacher moves from that of the judge advocate towards that of a constructive builder of competencies in reading.

Increased attention is being paid to the developmental tasks of young children as a basis for planning the content and emphases in reading programs. In particular, attention is paid to the personal-social aspects of such childhood tasks as working out his own sex role, getting along with his own peers, sensing and using ethical and social values to give direction to his behavior, and winning some independence from adults.

While some of the newer reading materials contain stories which deal with these tasks, many teachers have made greater use of them in reading charts, group stories, and in the selection and use of children's trade books.

A different kind of attention is being paid to the range and nature of the differences that exist in any individual or group of children. Reading materials and reading instruction reflect these differences. Smaller groups are used and there is greater flexibility in grouping. Less emphasis is placed on arbitrary and mechanical instructional procedures such as having children take turns in reading in ritualistic fashion. There is greater willingness to try a number of techniques if one or a combination seem to be inadequate.

Increasing recognition is given to the importance of the continuity of the reading development of children over a month, a year, the period of common education. Reading as an important learning tool in most of the educational experiences children have in school is a point of view accepted almost without question. The difficulty is to get this conception into the instructional practices of all areas of the curriculum and to see more clearly how it is possible to get an increasing maturity and skill in the use of reading. Reading maturity apparently is not the simple putting of one bit of skill on top of another but rather the development of abilities which mature and become increasingly powerful tools of learning.

Emphasis is given to the relatedness of reading to the other arts of

language and the importance of each in their mutual development. In developing the reading program teachers should use the contributions of oral, written, and listening language experiences to reading and vice versa. The implications of this point of view for effective reading instruction and overall language development are many and significant.

Increasing attention is being given to the child's reading for his own enjoyment and personal development. Work in bibliotherapy has pointed out the importance of the child's own self-concept as a driving force behind his behavior. The reading program at all levels might pay increasing attention to this kind of opportunity for development.

The Ways Children Learn

The influence of our thinking about ways in which children learn more effectively is probably responsible for a number of trends in the teaching of reading.

Nowadays we try to have reading instruction take place in a situation where the child sees reading as necessary to achieve some personal or educational goal. Sometimes this is called functional reading.

Reading is planned in units which are as close as possible to the reading goals of understanding and use in thought and action.

Of course we still have millions of children being taught to read by learning their letters, then their words, then sentences, and paragraphs. In spite of this tradition which still exists today, there is general agreement that stories themselves

are better kinds of instructional units. In these, thought units can be components of a meaningful whole. The most competent and thoughtful workers in the field of reading see these procedures as having an important role in the developmental reading program.

At the same time there is a tendency towards greater flexibility in the use of techniques, methods, and materials to help the child deal with his problems of learning to read. The rightness of a technique or method is determined by the child, the reading purpose, and the reading material. Emphasis is on selection and discriminating use of skills and materials rather than on a blind faith in either the "shot gun" use of materials and procedures or on a technique claimed to solve all reading ills. There is still much faith in great "names" or in particular reading series carefully graded and tailored to do all things. But there is a growing realization that learning to read is a personal business for every child.

Now we are moving away from vocabulary development on the basis of word lists to be memorized. We are attempting to develop vocabulary in meaningful contexts where the child can cultivate comprehensive and selective procedures of word attack. Of course many teachers cling to faith in single and limited methods of vocabulary development. But there is some evidence that emphasis on meaning is proving very successful for good readers and for good teachers.

At one time readiness for reading was associated only with beginning

reading. Now we use it to include reading development and maturation at all levels and in all areas of the curriculum. Readiness is important in all learning experiences and is certainly not limited to a single mental age or reading skill. The child's background of experience, reading purposes, the nature of his reading material, and his feeling of confidence, are equally important in determining readiness. In fact, there is less and less tendency to use the word "readiness" and a greater tendency to substitute "levels of development and maturity."

Sharp black or white, either-or judgments regarding a child's reading are changing. We are seeing success in reading as a problem of judging his *development* in reading. The basis for the judgment should be the child and his purposes and goals, not the over-simplified evidence of being able to recognize and pronounce a given word.

Curriculum Planning and Development

In the area of instructional practices, two trends are perhaps most noteworthy.

First, we have better balance between oral and silent reading. Emphasis is on the proper form of reading for the appropriate use. Silent reading is the more important because it meets more reading purposes. Oral reading permits an easy check on the verbal reproduction of words and phrases, but it is being recognized as a limited and many times restricting emphasis and procedure.

Second, we are emphasizing the

overall curriculum use of reading as an important and necessary learning tool. There is still controversy between the reading teacher and the content specialist as to who is responsible for developing reading skills of upper grade children in content areas. Gradually, however, there is a growing realization that every teacher, no matter what her area of responsibility, helps develop reading abilities as a legitimate part of her teaching responsibilities.

Reading Materials

There have been many improvements in basic reading series, in trade books, and in self-contained material in content areas. We are giving more attention to school libraries as an essential part of a good school.

Some of these resources in a reading program pose many controversial questions to be faced and solved in some fashion.

In-Service and Community Education

A promising trend here is the development of cooperative programs of in-service education, in reading and the language arts.

We find, too, a greater attempt to include the home and community in developing and evaluating a reading program. This has resulted in parent-teacher conferences on child progress in school, parent study groups, and school-community study-action programs. The emphasis in most of these attempts is on honest, realistic, cooperative effort to improve the educational program of the community.

These five areas of reading in-

struction and development, then, offer many interesting illustrations of trends in our thinking and practices in our reading programs.

This is a rather imposing picture of the comprehensive and fundamental work that has been done to improve our reading instruction in the past thirty years. Many teachers, scholars, and publishers have been responsible for this contribution. It is something in which we can take some pride. Let us not lose this progress in the furor growing out of the attacks upon schools and their practices. If the rest of our curriculum could have made equal progress, even greater contributions would have been made to America's children.

Let us have faith in the progress which comes from the free and open constructive examination and testing of competing ideas and programs. The ultimate goal of all education and of all reading programs is the same—the most positive and significant contribution to the child's reading ability and overall educational and personal development.

Radio, TV, Comics, etc.

For teachers and parents who are troubled by "the problem" of radio, TV, comics and movies, Science Research Associates have an excellent pamphlet, "Your Child and Radio, T.V., Comics, and Movies" by Paul Witty and Harry Bricker.

Available from Science Research Associates, 57 W. Grand Ave., Chicago 10, Ill. Single copies 40¢, 3 for \$1.00.

Current Issues in the Teaching of Reading

by Lou LaBrant
School of Education
New York University
New York City

THE NAME of this organization, The International Council for the Improvement of Reading Instruction, leads me to begin our discussion of current issues in the teaching of reading by a brief overview of the international language scene. Within that larger picture our own national problems have their setting. We need more often to think of reading in terms of languages and nations, and our special problems in the light of national and international movements. We may, indeed, need to be reminded of the role of reading in the world as we become more and more involved in detailed discussions of readiness, eye distortions, machines, tests, formulae, so-called remedial sections, and masses of cure-all materials flowing from educational presses.

The International Scene

There are on the earth today about two and a fourth billion persons speaking a total of 2,796 different languages. It seems fair to say that at least two billion of these are at an age suitable for reading in terms of our own culture. Of these two billion, however, we can estimate that probably fewer than one in three can read and write. Of those counted as "literate," there are many with an ability which has some personal but

This article is based on the address delivered by Dr. LaBrant at the February 16 meeting of the ICIRI.

very little social value.

It may be well to consider for a moment the importance of illiteracy in today's world, for with need to decide about national and international affairs reaching even the remote tribesman in Africa and Asia, the question of communication is critical. What form this communication should take is not, however, entirely clear.

Historically man has moved from oral, man-to-man communication to the world of letters. Until the present century there was little choice. The only ways for knowing about the world were three: seeing or investigating at first hand; talking to persons who had themselves investigated; or reading. In consequence we developed the belief that reading was the primary step in the education of a people. At least, the Western World has thought this, and reading has been an indispensable element in formal education in the East.

Today there are new possibilities, seriously considered by those who have responsibility for directing education. In our country we have re-

cently seen television take over many of the functions formerly carried by the local lecturer or the press. The suggestion is being made repeatedly that, for areas still largely illiterate such as India, the development of sufficient reading skill to enable citizens to vote may be not only a costly but a dangerously slow process, and that other devices might serve instead. These substitutes might be the loud speaker with recordings, the film strip and recording run on batteries, and in towns with electricity the radio, motion picture, and recorded speech.

In the field of transportation such a jump from the primitive to the most modern is common. We cannot travel to many of the interesting spots of South America or Africa by car or train, but we can fly. Intermediate steps between donkey and airplane have been omitted. It is thinkable that some analogous process might take place in communication. If this were so, there might be some reflection in our own country. Note again an analogy. If one wants to travel to Chile, he is likely to fly all the way, although he might go by automobile or train part of the journey. The end of the trip changes the beginning. So, too, if India or China or any other country with which we need to communicate adopted or emphasized a new form of communication it might well influence our own.

While we are thinking about reading in the world as a whole, let us notice some of the difficulties in teaching it. As was mentioned before, nearly three thousand recognized languages are spoken on the earth today.

In some of these there is no or practically no literature at all, and in many of them no body of informational literature which would work toward world citizenship. Unless an impossible amount of careful translation is undertaken, these people must remain outside the world of communication by print, or must learn a second language. The problem of teaching a second language as the language to be read is a complicated one. India, for example, is struggling with this question now. Should the people learn one of the major Indian languages? National interests point to a national tongue, preserving the great books of the culture. But this means a new language for millions of persons. It would be good if more were known about the optimum time and situation for teaching how to read a language not learned or spoken at home. Our own experience has been largely negative.

We have made several unfortunate experiments. The United States, for example, undertook to establish English in Puerto Rico when we took that island from Spain. After several decades of trying to teach English in the elementary grades with almost no success at all, local educators changed to teaching first the reading of Spanish. They found what should have been obvious: that learning to read is itself enough of an adjustment for any child to make in a two or three year period, and that confusing this by the introduction of a strange language is to defeat both the new language and reading. Such attempts were made, of course, in the Philippines, with Mexican children in our

Southwest, and elsewhere. In this country, where one language dominates and dialects differ only slightly, we have had a relatively simple problem in teaching children to read.

Our own national share in the world's reading is changing. Wherever the Point Four program goes, our machines and techniques go also and with them directions and explanations. Immediate use is furthered by ability to read English. In consequence there is often an accompanying program of teaching both speaking and reading of English. Materials are few and often woefully inadequate. Efforts are dependent upon scattered individuals and departments in a few colleges. National organizations have largely ignored the problem. Much that could well have been the result of careful research and informed study has been left to improvisation by Army and Navy personnel. Fortunately some of these men have been informed scholars, students of the general culture of the foreign country as well as of languages *per se*.

Nevertheless it seems discouraging that many still assume that anyone who speaks English can teach it, that English is taught to a Chinese or Japanese by the same method as to someone who speaks an Indo-European language. We are at present woefully short of persons equipped for teaching reading abroad. The sad state of our own teaching of foreign languages here is perhaps a contributing factor.

Reading in the United States

The United States ranks sixth or

seventh in the world community in terms of literacy, but because of a rapid progress in producing mass media of communication it probably leads the world in *certain* reading problems. The advent of the motion pictures, the development of radio broadcasting, and the improvement of television have all appeared to many teachers of reading as competitors to print. In one sense this is true. Obviously one cannot listen to a radio commentator and simultaneously read the news item being discussed; one cannot watch television and read; neither can one watch a motion picture while he reads a play.

This competition for time has led some persons to attempt to defend reading, as though it were an unquestioned good attacked by nefarious enemies. We have to recognize that these new methods of communication are legitimate means for doing many things once limited to reading, and that some of the functions of reading have now passed over to the new media and should and will stay there. We do not listen to the Chicago Round Table in addition to doing all the reading we previously did, but as a substitute for some reading and a method for saving time in browsing and selection. A motion picture version of "Goodbye Little Sheba" may be a substitute for reading the play or seeing it on the stage. Light fiction is often as well presented in cinema as in print.

Our students know this. They do not use radio, cinema, or television as additions; they use them as basic elements in their exploration of the world, and we must recognize this.

One problem, therefore, in our culture is learning when to read and when to look and listen. In our teaching this may include one or all of the following: delayed reading, less reading, more intensive reading, combination of reading with other media, emphasis on rereading, private or individualized reading, leisurely reading.

It should be noted in examining this problem that broadcasts do not permit one to repeat, to choose his own time, to skip or to elect one's pace. Radio and television have, however, largely eliminated the need for skimming the news, for certain light reading chosen merely to divert. They have provided critical comment and analysis of events more intelligent than that provided by most newspapers and popular magazines. Moreover, after the initial investment, it is inexpensive to compare points of view.

In contrast we have more need for a careful, critical reading of an important document, for quiet enjoyment of a story or poem, for private reading which gives the reader a sense of continuity and that feeling of control gained by reading which gives the reader a sense of continuity and that feeling of control gained by reading rapidly or slowly, all or a part, till eleven or one o'clock. The final chapter need not be halted by a sleepy announcer informing us that till morning dance music will flow from the platters.

There is an oddly contradictory problem in our national demands. Acceptance, however reluctant, of world leadership has made it imperative

that, unless we are to leave our affairs to someone who seems to be a fairly agreeable man whose ideas we do not know, we must be informed. For example, we need at the moment, if we are to be responsible, to understand such matters as: the rivalries, needs, and politics of the various African countries; something about the financial structure of France; the internal affairs of Egypt and Spain; the agricultural and living conditions of South America; the geography of the Polar Regions. We are besieged daily, by press and radio, by speeches full of quotations out of context, emotional words, confusion of terms, and other devices which, whether by ignorance or intent, tend to lead us from the facts. We meet daily the big lie and the small distortion. Reading of the highest order is demanded. What, instead, do we have?

Our school population, ranging as it must from the very dull to the very brilliant, is being taught to think it can read. According to our standardized measures, a third of our product cannot even imagine it is reading the materials I have just been describing. These tests, however, almost without variation, measure merely the ability to know what the text says. In other words, reading, as measured by our generally accepted instruments, may be only ability to say in the same or almost the same words what has been seen on the page. Our tests and hence our norms have little if anything to show about *critical* reading. One of our problems is to decide whether this ability to repeat is an asset or a liability. Is it wise to teach a man to think he can read when he

can only accept? It is more than possible that intelligent use of radio and television and pictures in connection with reading might stimulate questions. The population of the City of New York is—save for a small percentage of immigrants—literate in English. If you ride the subways and observe the reading that is being done, you may be discouraged about what we have accomplished with our so-called literate group.

The problem of half-literacy is one which the next decades will see enlarged in other countries. Do not misunderstand me. I believe in mass education and in mass elections. But I believe also we have taught only half of reading, and more serious still, have given our students and public an inadequate evaluation of what has been taught.

In Conclusion

It is perhaps unfair to ask anyone to talk on problems. He is almost automatically cast in the role of pessimist. Let me point to some of the optimistic elements in the reading scene. Among these I would name a growing recognition of our need for critical reading; an introduction of radio and television instruction in our schools (and I do not mean dressing up a program by "visual aids"); a growing tendency to relate the various communication media; increasing use of individualized reading in grades and high schools, with occasional touches even in the colleges; an experimental program on the teaching of English as a second language in Puerto Rico and some areas of the Philippines; and exchange of

reading teachers throughout international scholarships.

We are working on our problems and that is encouraging. But time runs swiftly. The past century has seen us move from three-mile-an-hour travel for most citizens to faster-than-sound for the farm boy inducted into the air service. Instead of a few telephones in rural areas, the farmer's wife now hears international broadcasts as she works. We may well wonder whether our understanding of reading problems has kept pace.

First of the Three R's

Reading and the other communication skills have a prominent place in *The Three R's in the Elementary School*, recent publication of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

This 152-page report indicates that reading in the modern school should encourage inquiry and should help the child solve his personal and group problems. It points out "that these abilities are best developed in a total, meaningful setting, not in isolated periods of the school day."

The Three R's in the Elementary School was prepared by the following ASCD Committee: Margaret Lindsey, Althea Beery, Edwina Deans, and Frances K. Martin. Copies of the book are available from the ASCD, 1201 16th St., N. W., Washington 6, D. C. Price: \$1.50.

College Students Sharpen Their Reading Skills at Drake

by Douglas F. Parry
Associate Professor of Education
Drake University
Des Moines, Iowa

THE READING and Study Skills Laboratory of Drake University is sponsored jointly by the College of Education and the Student Personnel Services. It is intended to serve five major functions: (1) to help teachers teach children to read more effectively; (2) to work with elementary and secondary school pupils as a phase of laboratory experience in the teacher training program; (3) to serve university students who wish to improve their learning skills; (4) to offer reading improvement courses for the general adult population of the community; and (5) to conduct reading improvement programs for select adult groups such as business executives.

Certain aspects of our program for college students have general significance for elementary and secondary school teachers.

We believe that every learner can profit from continued suggestions on "how to learn." Every freshman and transfer student to Drake University receives an orientation to reading and study by means of a brief talk during orientation week supplemented by printed materials. The following suggestions are among those in our printed pamphlet for students:

Much of your academic success and your happiness in University life will depend upon how well you read and

study. In wishing you every success and happiness at Drake, we are passing along a few reminders to help you as a student and a learner.

Set aside a definite time and place for study each day. Schedule your periods of study so that you complete your lessons and have time for other things too.

Know what you are supposed to learn. Read for something, don't just read. Use your textbook and your instructor's clues as to what is important.

Read in three steps. First, get a general overview of what is to be done; then read to select what is important to learn; finally, re-read to insure meaning and retention.

Review lessons frequently. An hour of review of familiar material often results in as much actual learning as five or six hours of original study.

Spend half of your reading and study time in producing. The final test of learning is in your behavior, usually in communicating what you have studied or experienced. You should be able to produce twice as many ideas if you spend half of your time trying to write, say, or think what you have read than if you spend all of your time in mere passive reading.

Learn new words. Get the habit of looking for and learning new words from books and lectures.

Make ideas meaningful. Think of an illustration, a definition, or something similar or different. Be sure that what you are trying to learn makes sense to you.

Take notes. Notes will serve as useful reminders of lectures and readings.

Organize your ideas. Sort out causes and effects, relate ideas by time or place, see how events are related to one another. Organization adds to meaning and to remembering.

Get acquainted with your library. Learn how to find and use the wealth of knowledge stored in books and current periodicals in your library.

Remember your writing skills. Much of what you learn will be reviewed by your instructors in what you communicate to them in the form of reports and examinations. You will need both knowledge and writing skills.

Think! Originality, creativity, and the intelligent application of ideas is the privilege and the responsibility of you as a University student. You will be encouraged to think at Drake.

Let us help you. The Reading and Skills Laboratory, 104 Illinois Building, is open to all students of Drake University. Books on the improvement of reading and study are available during the entire semester. Classes which meet twice a week for a seven week period begin at three-week intervals throughout the semester. Even superior readers improve their speed and comprehension with special help. You are cordially invited to utilize this service of Drake University.

Kinds of Students

Approximately 200 students enroll voluntarily each year in our reading and study skills improvement program. These students receive no academic credit for their participation, but seek to improve their reading comprehension, reading speed, vocabularies, and such academic skills as note-taking, preparing reports, and taking examinations.

Because of the voluntary nature of the program, superior as well as inferior learners seek training. Perhaps four types of students may be identified: inferior students who recognize their academic deficiencies; average individuals who wish to improve themselves in order to save time or to earn higher grades; superior undergraduates who think that the greatest rewards from additional training are for those who already excel; and graduate students who are meeting requirements of truly extensive reading for the first time.

The learning needs of these students are therefore varied and often highly specific. Initial reading speeds may vary from 80 to 400 words per minute. Initial reading comprehension scores on college level material may vary from 0 to 100 percent. Some students need the development of simple vocabularies first. Approximately one-fourth of the poorest readers cannot attack or pronounce words new to them and need basic help in pronunciation, diacritical marks, dictionary usage, and ways of analyzing words into pronounceable units with attendant understandings of such matters as vowel sounds in relation to open and closed syllables.

Practically all students need guidance in reading in the content fields; evidently earlier training in reading has emphasized literary type materials at the expense of such content areas as science and social studies. Most students need help in communicating what they have read. And of course there are related problems as daily regime, health, vocational goals, and simple work habits.

Consequently, our program must be highly individualized. To accomplish individualization of instruction, we provide each student with an overview and record sheet for our entire program, acquaint him with our resource materials and methods of procedure, and permit considerable freedom of student action thereafter.

On this student activity record sheet specific assignments are given in such references as *Effective Study* by F. P. Robinson, *Studying the Major Subjects* by Claude C. Crawford, and *A College Developmental Reading Manual* by S. Vincent Wilking.

Space on the same sheet is given for the student's test scores, and results on the flashmeter.

When instruction is individualized, student record forms of accomplishment are required so that each student will be able to observe his own strengths and weaknesses and the instructor may analyze student progress and recommend areas of work. A record is kept of each individual's accomplishment.

A collection of concise suggestions

Use the ballot on p. 48 to vote for new ICIRI officers.

for the student in various skill areas is also given.

Results of Program

What are the results of our program? Statistical reports by the author have appeared elsewhere. We could report that the typical poor reader who attends our group sessions improves his reading speed from 150 to 250 words per minute and his comprehension from 50 to 85 percent. However, informal judgments seem more informative. One hundred percent of the students who attended our group sessions during the past semester reported that they had been helped by the services of the laboratory. Their individual comments and experiences reveal highly personalized evaluations: a more systematic approach to their studies, improved reading skill, greater confidence in themselves, realization of the need for the correction of a visual difficulty, a procedure for writing a book review, greater interest in their studies, the necessity of reducing their academic loads until basic skills are developed, a higher grade on an examination, a biology book that suddenly starts "to make sense," or just feeling better about things.

We believe that learning "how to learn" is as significant to a student as his absorbing aspects of any specific content course. And we have provided our students with an opportunity for this as well as for specific helps as they are needed. They appreciate our efforts. Perhaps programs with similar purposes could be extended profitably in elementary and secondary schools.

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— Emmett A. Betts

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Reading Workshops

A Workshop in Corrective Reading will be held at the University of Chicago, June 29-July 24, in affiliation with the Sixteenth Annual Conference on Reading.

During the first four days of the Workshop, participants will attend the Annual Reading Conference. In the remaining weeks, they will do intensive work in small groups under the following leaders: *Elementary*, Dr. Albert J. Harris; *High School*, Dr. William S. Gray; *College*, Dr. George Spache; *Clinic*, Dr. Helen M. Robinson.

July 27-August 7, Dr. William D. Sheldon will direct a Workshop on the Supervision of Reading in the Elementary School to be held under the auspices of Syracuse University.

Emphasis will be placed on small work groups and individual consultation with Workshop staff members. These include: Dr. Gertrude Whipple, Supervisor of Reading in Detroit; Miss Dorothy E. Cooke, Supervisor of Elementary Schools, New York State Department of Education; Dr. William D. Sheldon, Director of the Reading Laboratory at Syracuse; and others.

DR. DONALD L. CLELAND
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY-TREASURER, I.C.I.R.I.
UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
PITTSBURGH 13, PENNSYLVANIA

☐ I hereby apply for membership in the International Council for the Improvement of Reading Instruction and enclose \$2.00 as my annual membership dues for the year, \$1.50 of which is for subscription to THE READING TEACHER.

☐ I hereby apply for life membership in The International Council for the Improvement of Reading Instruction and enclose \$50.00 as my life membership dues, \$37.50 of which is for a life's subscription to THE READING TEACHER.

☐ I enclose \$2.00 for the charter fee for a local council of the I.C.I.R.I. along with the names of five paid-up sponsoring members.

☐ Please send me information about forming a local council of the I.C.I.R.I.

Name Local Council

Street

City Zone State

Please make checks payable to Donald L. Cleland, Executive Secretary-Treasurer.

Reading Council News

More than 300 people attended the I.C.I.R.I. meeting held February 16 as a part of the annual conference of the American Association of School Administrators in Atlantic City.

Dr. Virgil Herrick of the University of Wisconsin spoke on "Recent Trends in the Teaching of Reading." Dr. Lou LaBrant of New York University spoke on "Current Issues in the Teaching of Reading." A condensation of each of these papers is given in this issue of *THE READING TEACHER* beginning on page 33.

The Executive Board of the I.C.I.R.I. held two business meetings during the Atlantic City conference. Committee reports were heard, budget plans were made, and news of local councils was discussed.

Dr. Cleland, Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the I.C.I.R.I., reported paid membership of over 2,600. This is a little more than double the membership at the same time last year. There are now thirteen local councils with at least ten more being organized at this time.

Annual Elections

Dr. Gertrude Williams, Chairman of the Elections Committee, reported the nominees to be presented for President-Elect and for Executive Board Members. A ballot is mailed to each member of the I.C.I.R.I. as a part of *THE READING TEACHER*. (See the reverse side of this page.) Each member is asked to cast his vote by filling in this ballot and returning it to the Elections Chairman. (The address is given on the ballot on page 48.)

The officers so elected will be presented by the Elections Chairman at the Assembly, annual meeting of the I.C.I.R.I.

Assembly, May 16

The annual Assembly of the I.C.I.R.I. will be held on Saturday, May 16, at the Hotel Paramount, 235 West 46th Street, New York City. Each local council is entitled to send a representative to the Assembly. The meeting will begin with luncheon at 12:30 in the dining room of the Paramount. Reservations for the luncheon should be made by May 1 to Dr. Donald L. Cleland, Executive Secretary-Treasurer, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Penna.

At the Assembly, reports will be made on the work of the year 1952-53 and plans will be made for the coming year. One important topic for discussion will be problems of local councils. The new officers will take over immediately following the Assembly.

Queensborough Council

The first general meeting of the Queensborough Council of the I.C.I.R.I. was held in late February with an enthusiastic group of members drawn from the educational personnel of the Borough of Queens in New York City.

The new council reports the following officers: *President*, David Price, Principal, P.S. 84, Queens; *President-Elect*, Edwin Colbath, Assistant Principal, Bureau of Curriculum Research; *Secretary*, Elsie Stahl, Assistant Principal, P.S. 175; *Treasurer*, Helen Lasher, Queens College.

Vote Now for New Reading Council Officers

Members of the I.C.I.R.I. are urged to fill in this ballot and send it in at once to the Elections Chairman

EACH MEMBER of the International Council for the Improvement of Reading Instruction is entitled to vote for new council officers.

According to the constitution, a President-Elect is chosen each year. At the end of the year, he automatically becomes President of the I.C.I.R.I. Dr. Paul Witty, President-Elect for 1952-53, will become President for the year 1953-54.

The out-going President remains a member of the Executive Board for the year following his term as President. Thus, Dr. Albert Harris, Pres-

ident for 1952-53, will serve on the board for the year 1953-54. Two new board members are elected each year to serve for two years.

The following ballot is drawn up in accordance with the regulations of the I.C.I.R.I. Ballots should be mailed at once to Dr. Gertrude Williams, Elections Chairman, to reach her office before May 1, 1953.

The names of the candidates chosen by this ballot will be presented by the Elections Committee at the annual meeting of the Assembly on May 16, 1953, in New York City.

Names of candidates for office may be written in.

For President-Elect (Vote for One)

—MARGARET A. ROBINSON
Principal, Pauline Ave. School
Toronto, Ontario.

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.....

For Executive Board (Vote for two)

—DR. DONALD D. DURRELL
Director, Educational Clinic
Boston University
Boston, Massachusetts

—DR. RUTH STRANG
Teachers College
Columbia University
New York City

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Mail your ballot to:

DR. GERTRUDE H. WILLIAMS
Elections Chairman
Miner Teachers College
Georgia Ave. & Euclid St., N.W.
Washington 1, D. C.